

Recognizing the Community of Palco, Kansas

March 7, 2006

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the citizens of Palco, Kansas for long-term efforts to sustain and revitalize their community.

Mayor Leo VonFeldt is proud to call this town of 235 people home. "Palco continues to grow," VonFeldt said. "The community has done a lot to keep going forward."

Over the last ten years, the citizens of Palco have taken action to ensure that their community continues to be home to another generation of Kansans.

In 1996, a USDA Rural Development grant was supplemented by \$125,000 of local dollars in order to complete an expansion of Kysar Machine Products. This effort provided six jobs to the local economy.

The development of Keller Motors/Petro Plus & Quality Collision Repair was completed in 1998. This half a million dollar project included a \$250,000 owner investment, \$200,000 in local contributions and federal funding of \$50,000. The result of this shared investment is that six employees now provide area residents a full service gas station, 24 hour fuel access and auto collision service. The business has made a positive contribution to the community. The significance of that contribution was highlighted when owner Myron Keller was recognized as the 2004 National Young Entrepreneur of the Year by the U.S. Small Business Administration. Keller said he was humbled by the award, which in his opinion belongs to the entire community. "Our community recognizes that we can't just sit back. We must be pro-active and keep working hard for a better future," Keller said. "Nothing just happens in rural America. You have to make it happen."

In 2002, a dedicated effort was made to enhance local government services through construction of a new city building. The facility was funded by \$120,000 in local donations and includes a city office, ambulance service and fire department.

The following year, community food service availability was greatly improved when the Palco Community Development Corporation purchased and completely remodeled a local restaurant. The \$45,000 project has resulted in six day a week restaurant service. In addition, new ownership took over Palco's grocery store which preserved access to grocery service for local residents.

In 2004, an investment of \$132,000 from local and federal sources resulted in the renovation and opening of the Palco Medical Clinic. The clinic provides residents with needed health care service. Also, Midwest Community Bank opened a facility in Palco which preserved local access to lending and investment opportunities. That same year, the city completed a two year community enhancement initiative. The \$2.2 million project established a home improvement program, a new sewer plant and construction of a new city street near the downtown area.

In the last decade, the citizens of Palco have leveraged more than \$3,250,000 of private, local and federal investment into their community. Most recently, the town has taken on the task of developing a local day care facility. Community leaders hope to have the facility open by the fall of this year. According to Mayor VonFeldt this is just one more example of the community coming together to achieve a goal. "Citizens are willing to give of their time, energy and resources, VonFeldt said. "This is what makes Palco great."

For rural communities to survive and prosper into the future, citizens must be willing to create their own opportunities for success. Ongoing efforts to revitalize Palco are an example of how hard work, vision and community support can create just such an opportunity.

Citizens throughout Kansas are working together to enhance the quality of life in their communities. Palco is a success story that demonstrates how teamwork and creative thinking can make a positive difference in rural America.